
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Water Efficiency Practices for Domestic Indoor Water Use

Only 1 percent of the earth's water is available for drinking. The average American uses 100 gallons of water a day. Our excessive water use habits deplete potable drinking water supplies and return trillions of gallons of wastewater to streams and coastal waters. The following indoor water efficiency practices can save as much as 25,000 gallons of water per person per year. Water efficiency practices not only save water, they save money. See fact sheet WD-DWGB-26-15, "[Performing a Domestic Water Use and Conservation Audit](#)" for a description of how to determine water use in your home. To save water on outdoor use please see fact sheet WD-DWGB-26-3, "[Water Efficiency Practices for Outdoor Water Use](#)."

General Water Efficiency Practices

The following water efficiency practices apply to general domestic water use. Bathroom, kitchen and laundry water use are addressed in later sections.

- Shut off water when not in use, such as when you brush your teeth or shave.
- Install low flow faucet aerators or laminar flow restrictors that limit flow to <2.5gpm on all faucets in the house. These devices are readily available at most hardware and building supply stores.
- Never put water down the drain when you can use it for something else, such as watering plants.
- Insulate water pipes and hot water heaters. This retains heat so that you don't have to run the water as long for it to get hot. It also saves on energy costs.
- As they wear out, replace water-wasting appliances, such as washing machines and dishwashers, with water efficient ones.
- Avoid water softening systems unless absolutely necessary. Backwashing these systems uses large quantities of water. If you do use a water softener, run the minimum amount of regenerations recommended to maintain softness.
- Turn off pumps, water softeners, and other water-using equipment while on vacation.
- Check for leaks and repair discovered leaks. Not only will you save water but you will save energy and money. A large percentage of energy costs can be attributed to pumping, treating, heating, and cooling water.

- If you are on municipal water and have a meter at your house, check the meter over a period of time when no one is using water. If the meter moves, you have a leak.
- If you have a well, the pump shouldn't run at times when no water is being used.

Water Efficiency Practices in the Bathroom

More than one fourth of all domestic indoor water consumption is used in the bathroom. The following water efficiency practices will help you save water in the bathroom.

- Install ultra-low flow toilets (ULF) that use a maximum of 1.3 gal/flush (6.0L/flush) or retrofit existing toilets with displacement bottles or dams. Dual flush toilets offer a choice between the 1.6-gallon flush for solid wastes and a 1.0-gallon flush for liquid only. Never put bricks in toilet tanks; they disintegrate over time. Use a squat, fat glass jar, like a pickle jar, no more than 6" high, filled with water. Glass is heavier than plastic and less apt to shift around in the tank.
- Don't use the toilet as a garbage disposal. Avoid unnecessary toilet flushing by disposing of tissues, cigarette butts and the like in the trash and composting vegetable food waste.
- Replace or repair toilet flush handles that stick in the flush position.
- Avoid using automatic bowl cleaners in your toilet tank. These chemicals rapidly degrade flapper valves and other tank components, causing the toilet to leak.
- Adjust the toilet tank float level so that water fills no higher than 0.5"-1.0" below the top of the overflow pipe. At higher levels water can flow down the pipe and leak through to the bowl. The refill valve then tops off the tank, causing a continuous cycle of drain and fill.
- Install low flow showerhead devices that limit flow to <2.5gpm and take shorter showers.
- Fill bathtubs no more than half full.
- Detect leaks in toilet tanks by dropping food coloring in the tank (12 drops). Do not flush the toilet for at least an hour. If the tank leaks the dye will show up in the bowl.

Water Efficiency Practices in the Kitchen

The following water efficiency practices can be applied to routine kitchen chores to save water.

- Operate dishwashers with full loads only. Use the water-save cycle if your dishwasher is equipped with one.
- If washing dishes by hand, rinse them in a basin rather than under running water.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator rather than running the tap for cold water.
- Compost food scraps rather than using a garbage disposal. Not only do disposal units waste water; the fine particles they produce can clog a septic system.
- Consider installing an instant water heater on the kitchen faucet. This reduces the time needed to run water until it becomes hot.

- Do not run water to melt ice or thaw frozen foods. Defrost them in a microwave or in the refrigerator overnight.
- Rinse vegetables in a pan of water rather than under running water.

Water Efficiency Practices in the Laundry

Water use in the laundry is usually the second highest domestic indoor water use. The following water efficiency practices are designed to save water in the laundry.

- Wash full loads only. If unable to wash a full load, set your washer to the appropriate water level setting.
- Consider replacing your top loading, vertical axis washer with a more efficient horizontal axis washer. Most of these are front loading like laundromat machines, but some newer models are also top loading. These washers rotate clothes rather than agitating them and use much less water, an average of 20 gallons per load compared to an average of 43 gallons for conventional washers. See the EPA's Energy Star website listed at the end of this document for a catalog of Energy Star approved efficient washing machines.

For Additional Information

Please contact the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at (603) 271-2513 or dwgbinfo@des.state.nh.us or visit our website at www.des.nh.gov/dwgb. All of the bureau's fact sheets are on-line at www.des.nh.gov/dwg.htm.

Resources

Woodinville, WA Water District. In-depth water-saving tips, how to check for leaks. www.woodinvillewater.com/indoor.html

Michigan State University Extension. Water-saving tips, a graphic explaining how to make and install a toilet dam www.msue.msu.edu/imp/mod02/01500570.html

National Exemption Service, Inc. Indoor water-saving tips. www.hocut.com/savewater1.htm

US EPA. Listing of Energy Star rated washing machines. www.energystar.gov/products/clotheswashers/commercial-cw.shtml

References:

_____, *MRI Water Conservation Technical Bulletin #5, Water Conservation Best Management Practices for Domestic/Sanitary Water Use*; New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission, Wilmington, MA; 1996.

_____; *MIL-Handbook-1165, Water Conservation*; US Dept. of Defense; 1997; pp 25-37.
Vickers, Amy; *Handbook of Water Use and Conservation*; WaterPlow Press, Amherst, MA; 2001; pp 23-75, 87-133.

Note: This fact sheet is accurate as of January 2007. Statutory or regulatory changes, or the availability of additional information after this date may render this information inaccurate or incomplete.